CONDUCT OF COMPETING ARCHITECTS.

Sir,—In a recent article you say "Nobleness of heart, high feeling, integrity, were expected in olden time from the architect." Listen. A competition is in the market. Behold what a stir there is in the architectural hive; how they rush to and fro, tumbling one another over; how they jostle and struggle and wriggle. What is all this? One would expect to find these men in the secret recesses of their dwellings, studying, arranging, and calculating on the subject-matter. What is it they do? What vain thing do they imagine? They are *canvassing for votes*. Yes, these noble, honest, honourable men, are seeking votes for designs, of which no interested party in common justice should be cognizant. Is that a competition in which the man is actually prechosen by his preponderating interest? It is a farce, a wicked deceit; and what mean, unknown, underhand beings, act thus? Who be they, that we may hold them up to execration, and lash the rascals naked through the world.—Alas, vainly you seek among the crowd who struggle for the dear life, for wives and children, for actual food. Robes, Sir, and fur gowns hide all, it is among those whose names are highest in their calling, who *have* wealth and station, and know not want; it is these, who backed by their party, thrust the struggling wretch back into the kennel, who canvass and succeed; these are those noble, honest, honourable men, whose nobly, honestly, honourably, uphold the integrity and respectability of our professional name. Why, then, should we complain of the opinion in which we are held, when such is our shameful practice? Oh, weep, weep for the nobleness of that art, which Michael Angelo, the haughty; Raffaelle, the noble; and Palladio, the honest; served in all honour, for which the cloistered holy man, the upright artist mason, yet receive praise and place.

Go forth in battle against this crying evil, this wretched farce of sealed competition; let no false delicacy prevent your speaking truth—speak, and spare not. Shew up its degrading influence, upon the employer and contractor—all to blame—and receive the heartfelt thanks of those at least to whom the character of noble, honest, honourable men, is still dearer than success. Your hint concerning the Army and Navy Club competition draws forth these remarks.—I am, Sir, &c.,

J. B. Waring.

36, Ormond Chambers, Great Ormond-street.

P.S. Can you not prevent the destruction of St. Benet's Church? Not the slightest memorial of Sir C. Wren should be lost. A man who will soon be appreciated as the only one who ever understood the application of the Italian style to English edifices.

COMPETITION PLANS.

Sir,—The high character which your journal possesses, and with such good reason, on all subjects connected with the architectural profession, induces me to refer to you on the following points.

I suppose the case of competing designs sent in for a building of considerable extent, in which the requirements are many, and the difficulties of the site considerable, both as regards the form of the ground, and also the obtaining of light, the opportunities of which are circumscribed by the high walls of adjacent houses.

Suppose that of the designs submitted, there are three classes.

1st. Designs of which the plans of the interiors are well arranged to suit the purposes of the building, but their elevations, or exteriors, not so handsome as others.

2nd. Designs of which the elevations are more handsome than the first, but the interiors not so good.

3rd. Designs not so well arranged internally as the first, but better than the second, and with elevations better than the first, but not so good as the second.

Supposing three such designs, which ought to be selected as the one to be preferred?

Some may say without hesitation, "the middle class," which partakes (in part) of the advantages of the two other classes. But if that were chosen, we should have a design of a building confessedly inferior in *some points* to many of the rejected designs.

In such a case as I have supposed of competing designs, the real point for decision appears to me to be this—what is it which most essentially constitutes that which a building ought to be? Is it the arrangement of its interior, or the architectural proportions and pleasing effect of its exterior elevation?

May I ask the favour of your opinion on these points, or that at all events you will have the goodness to insert this letter, which will probably have the effect of drawing forth some remark from other correspondents, or from some of your able contributors.

I am, Sir, &c., A. N. C.

*** With that view we insert the letter. *En passant* we may remark, that every case should be judged on its own merits, with especial reference to the published instructions. If we may venture on that dangerous ground, a general principle, we would say, that the design which fully supplies the requirements advertised, with the greatest architectural skill and taste, consistent with the instructions, is entitled to be selected. In the case of a club-house, for example, accommodation *with* beauty is the great requirement; in the case of a public monument, perhaps, beauty alone. To carry the argument to absurdity, it may be remarked, that if when a man advertised for the best design for a house, he received one ordinary design, that could be soundly carried out to meet his views, and one, however beautiful, design for a church or monumental cross, his consideration would of course be due to the first rather than to the latter.

THE BRISTOL IMPROVEMENTS.

Messrs. J. M. Herbert, barrister-at-law, and Ambrose Poynter, official referee of metropolitan buildings, the surveyors appointed by the Woods and Forests to make inquiries in Bristol respecting the proposed Act for regulating buildings and party-walls, and for improving the city, have reported thereon, and by order of the Commons their report has been printed. The following is an abstract of the most interesting portion of it, relative to the proposed improvements, in the carrying out of which, as we have already slightly noticed, the corporation has entered into a friendly contract with the rate-payers, not to proceed further, until they shall have again considered the matter at two meetings of council, to be held a month apart, after the 24th of June, 1848.

The most important movement in contemplation, is the projected street from Temple-street to the railway terminus, necessary to accommodate a traffic in which, on an average, 2,000 passengers arrive and depart daily by the Great Western railway alone. The approach, to be called Victoria-street, is proposed to be run in a straight line from the terminus to Bristol-bridge, with a width of 65 feet, but the council for the present have limited the project to that portion which extends from the terminus to its junction with Temple-street. This appears to the surveyors to be a serious defect in the plan, and they are of opinion that it is in the highest degree desirable that the bill should provide for the whole scheme at once, and that as speedily as possible. The opening of Victoria-street, they observe, is no less desirable on sanatory and moral grounds, than as a public convenience. The buildings to be removed are, with some exception, "of the worst, meanest, and most ruinous description, without sewerage, huddled into confined alleys, and inhabited by the dregs of society." The outlay for the present portion of the plan is estimated at 24,000*l.*, and the return from frontages, &c., 11,000*l.*, causing an expenditure of 13,000*l.*; while the entire scheme would require 84,510*l.*, and produce 44,220*l.*, causing an expenditure of 40,290*l.*

The next improvement consists in the widening of Bristol bridge, by throwing out a new footway on corbels, which the surveyors think should be done on both sides. The widening and improving of Limekiln-lane, and Hotwell-road, is the next in importance, and is also recommended to be carried out. The widening of Clifton-place by the formation of a direct road, on Colonel Worrall's plan; an improvement at Park-place, to complete the communication between Bristol and Clifton-road, by way of Woodwell-lane, &c.; the improvement of Silver-street by the removal of two houses, and hence the continuance of the line of Bridewell-street; and the raising of the roadway to diminish the declivity at Redcliff-hill, are all favourably reported on; but the proposal to form a new street from Broad-street to Nelson-street, and one from Wine-street to Ciderhouse-passage, forming a junction with the former, is considered to be of more doubtful utility, although intended to open a more direct communication from the northern vicinity of the city to the railway terminus, and in other respects advantageous, by clearing away a bad and crowded neighbourhood in the very heart of the town.

HONEST BUILDING.

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE HOSPITAL.

Sir,—Being in Wolverhampton a few days ago, I looked round the building now erecting for the South Staffordshire Hospital, and was not a little surprised at the manner in which the masonry is being done.

The building is somewhat in the Italian style, the main part of the work being in brickwork, with stone pilasters and stone dressings to the windows. The pilasters, instead of adding strength to the building, are mere sham masonry; the brickwork is carried up the whole height, from 25 to 30 feet, with a slight recess left for the stone; the pilasters are afterwards stuck up against the wall in the recess, without bond to the brickwork or any other fastening, save a small iron cramp inserted into the brickwork at the top of each stone, each pilaster being in three or four stones, thus set one on the end of the other. The angle pilasters are also done in the same manner, and thus, instead of adding strength to the building, absolutely weaken it by the absence of the necessary bond between the stone and brickwork. How the cavity between the stone and brickwork is filled in I do not know, as I did not see any of them being set up.

The dressings to the windows are slight stone jambs, apparently about 6 or 7 in. by 5 in., set up in recesses left in the brickwork. On these jambs are placed entablatures; and several of the windows have pediments over them; and for the first time in my experience I observe that the pediments have the raking mouldings jointed at the apex, with a mitre joint,—a method of construction quite new to me in Italian masonry, as I have always considered the pediment over the window-opening a legitimate means of adding strength to the lintel and decorating the construction.

In passing round the building, I observed a number of fragments of broken cornices and other mouldings; and on inquiry I learned that a day or two before a considerable length of the cornice had fallen down, carrying with it the whole of the scaffolding, and doing great damage to the projecting corners of the windows: this must evidently have occurred from want of the proper wall hold.

These things led me to make inquiry who and what are the parties concerned; and I find the contractors are a plasterer and his sons, respectable men, but totally without experience, this being their first job as general builders; but I think the architect and clerk of the works are not without blame in the matter.

I did not go through the interior, I therefore cannot say how the timber work is done; but if no better constructed than the exterior masonry, the subscribers cannot congratulate themselves on having a strong substantial building.—I am, Sir, &c., Strength.

Stourbridge, March 29, 1847.

*** As a guarantee of the truth of the above, I inclose my address.

Another Boiler Explosion.—On Monday last, one of the steam-boilers belonging to John Wood and Brothers, Glossop (Derbyshire), blew up with great violence, unroofing the boiler-house and knocking down the wall with such force, that stones flew across the yard into the mill windows, and smashed both glass and frames. We have, before this, urged the necessity of some supervision of boilers. Scarcely a week passes without the occurrence of an accident, as well with new boilers as with old ones. Every new boiler should be tested by a responsible inspector.

To learn more about PDF Compression and OCR go to our website